

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: ALLIANCE CONSULTATIONS: ROLE OF THE MBFR
WORKING GROUP

REF: STATE 157092

SUMMARY. WITHIN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF THE BENEFITS THE
U.S. SEEKS FROM ALLIANCE CONSULTATIONS, WE BELIEVE THE
MBFR WORKING GROUP IF APPROPRIATELY UTILIZED CAN PLAY A LIMITED
BUT CONSTRUCTIVE, NON-OBSTRUCTIVE, ROLE IN NATO PREPARATIONS
FOR MBFR NEGOTIATIONS. BUT THE TASKS THE WG UNDERTAKES ON
BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL NEED MORE PRECISE DEFINITION THAN THE
COUNCIL IS LIKELY ALWAYS TO BE ABLE TO GIVE. WE THEREFORE
FAVOR THE IDEA (REFTEL) THAT THE SPC SHOULD, ON THE BASIS OF
GENERAL POLICY DISCUSSIONS IN THE COUNCIL, FORMULATE EXPLICIT
REQUESTS FOR STUDIES OR OTHER TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES ON THE PART
OF THE WORKING GROUP AS AN AID IN PREPARATION BY THE SPC OF
REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL. ACTION REQUESTED:
WASHINGTON AGREEMENT FOR US TO BEGIN WORKING INFORMALLY TOWARD
SUCH A COUNCIL/SPC/WG RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

1. WE WELCOME INVITATION TO COMMENT ON WASHINGTON'S
CONFIDENTIAL

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THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE MBFR WORKING GROUP
AND HOW THIS ROLE MIGHT BEST BE DEVELOPED AND DEFINED WITHIN
NATO. THE QUESTION OF THE WG'S FUTURE ROLE SHOULD BE VIEWED
IN THE GENERAL PERSPECTIVE OF ALLIANCE CONSULTATIONS.

2. THE NATO CONSULTATIVE PROCESS AND EXISTING ORGANS SUCH AS THE COUNCIL, DPC, AND MC PROVIDE THE U.S. WITH UNIQUE MULTILATERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, INFORMATION EXCHANGE, AND CONSENSUS-BUILDING. NATO CONSULTATIONS CAN FACILITATE OUR OBJECTIVE OF INDUCING AND PERSUADING THE OTHER ALLIES TO ADDRESS ISSUES AND RESPOND TO QUESTIONS AS THE U.S. DOES. ALTERNATIVELY, IF WE HOLD BACK ON AN ASPECT OF CONSULTATIONS, WE RISK UNINFORMED OR DIFFERENTLY INFORMED AND THEREFORE OCCASIONALLY UNWELCOME ALLIED RESPONSES AND INITIATIVES.

3. THE NATO CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ALSO GIVES THE U.S. AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFINE ITS OWN POSITIONS AFTER BASICALLY FRIENDLY AND UNDERSTANDING ALLIED CRITICISM, AND BEFORE WE PRESENT THESE POSITIONS TO OUR ADVERSARIES. THIS HELPS ENSURE THAT U.S. INITIATIVES AND POSITIONS ARE LOOKED AT ON THE WIDEST POSSIBLE BASIS OF THEIR MERIT AND CHANCES OF ULTIMATE SUCCESS.

4. WHILE THE MBFR WORKING GROUP PRESENTS SPECIAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE ALL TOO FAMILIAR AND HAS NO MORE THAN LIMITED SCOPE, IT OFFERS THE ADVANTAGES OF ALLIANCE CONSULTATION NOTED ABOVE. GIVEN THE DIFFERENCES IN ALLIED POLITICAL AND MILITARY VIEWS TOWARD MBFR, IT IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE, AS WASHINGTON NOTES, THAT THE MBFR WORKING GROUP COULD BECOME A FORUM FOR REOPENING ON A MILITARY TECHNICAL LEVEL ISSUES ALREADY CONSIDERED DECIDED OR AT LEAST CLOSED AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL. HOWEVER, MBFR IS IN OUR VIEW, SO DIFFICULT A MATTER AND SO LADEN WITH BASIC QUESTIONS OF ALLIANCE SECURITY AND COHESION, THAT MANY OF ITS TECHNICAL ASPECTS WILL NEED CONTINUING AIRING AND REVIEW WITHIN THE ALLIANCE AND EVEN POSSIBLY -- AS ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS UNFOLD -- A SECOND LOOK.

5. SOME ALLIES (U.K.) MIGHT SEEK TO USE THE WG TO DELAY THE MBFR NEGOTIATION PROCESS, BUT THOSE WHO WISH TO DELAY CAN FIND WAYS TO DELAY ANYWAY. THIS DANGER CAN BE MINIMIZED PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE COUNCIL CONSENSUS AS TO ITS OWN CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIMARY ALLIANCE ROLE.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THERE APPEAR TO BE TWO OPTIONS FOR GUIDING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MBFR WG IN THE FUTURE. THESE OPTIONS DO NOT INCLUDE AN EFFORT TO ABOLISH THE WG, FOR THE REASONS WASHINGTON HAS POINTED TO, NOR IS THERE AN OPTION FOR ANY MAJOR OR POLICY-MAKING ROLE FOR THE WG.

7. ONE OPTION WOULD BE TO SEEK FORMAL COUNCIL AGREEMENT THAT THE WORKING GROUP WILL UNDERTAKE ONLY THOSE STUDIES AND ACTIVITIES EXPLICITLY DIRECTED AND PRECISELY DESCRIBED BY THE COUNCIL. IN THE ABSTRACT, THIS APPROACH MIGHT GAIN CONSIDERABLE ALLIANCE SUPPORT, SINCE IT

UNDERLINES THE PRIMARY OF THE COUNCIL. HOWEVER, AS WASHINGTON NOTES, IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE FOR THE COUNCIL TO PROVIDE DETAILED GUIDANCE OF THIS SORT, AND THIS DIFFICULTY COULD ENCOURAGE CERTAIN DELEGATIONS TO OFFER "SHOPPING LISTS" OF ACTIVITIES WHICH IN THE AGGREGATE MIGHT PROVIDE THE WORKING GROUP (AND ITS STAFF GROUP) WITH A MANDATE AS SWEEPING AS THAT ENVISAGED BY THE WORKING GROUP'S STRONGEST PROPONENTS. ALTERNATIVELY, THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF (AND THE WG STAFF GROUP) MIGHT DRAFT PAPERS FOR NAC CONSIDERATION WITH SIMILARLY BROAD IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES.

8. A SECOND APPROACH, AS DESCRIBED PARA 11 REFTTEL, WOULD BE TO WORK TOWARD A COUNCIL CONSENSUS THAT THE COUNCIL'S

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